

# Equal Opportunities in Academic Research Development? Faculty Gender Bias and Stereotypes in Research Administration

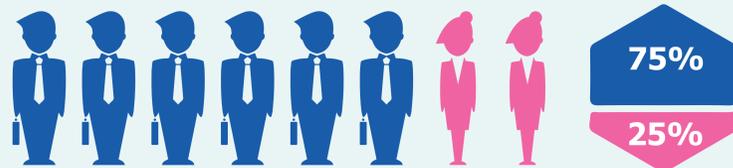
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## Background

Over the last two decades, **female basic science faculty were consistently underrepresented** (24.47% to 35.32%) in United States medical schools. Fewer women than men embark on a scientific career, and **proportionally more women than men drop out of science majors in college**. Those women who do persevere and obtain scientific graduate degrees often **do not achieve academic success** along the lines of male counterparts.



Female academics suffer when their research is judged primarily on the strength of their biosketch. However, the effects of gender bias and stereotypes from research administration on female researchers' productivity have not been closely examined. **The significance of this research was to shed light on the role research administrators might play in the judgment, treatment, and productivity of female researchers.**

## Purpose

**The purpose of this investigation was to explore whether research administrators evaluate extramural grant applicants differently based on gender and different career ranks.**

**Hypothesis 1:** Female and male applicants, overall, would be rated similarly in competence.

**Hypothesis 2:** Female candidates would be seen as more likable (researcher collegiality) and would be rated higher for mentoring potential than male applicants.

**Hypothesis 3:** Senior career rank applicants would be more highly rated for research competence and skill.

Although we did not have any other formal hypotheses, we also assessed biosketch design and comprehension, and **expected that senior career rank applicants would likely be more highly rated for biosketch design and comprehension** due to competence in the field.

## Methods

Survey population of **35 research administrators** from Society of Research Administrators International (SRAI) and the International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS). The majority were **female (82.9%)** and living in the **United States (91.4%)**. Small, medium, and large institutions were evenly represented. Participant expertise related to pre-award (77.1%), proposal development (60.0%), and research development (57.1%).

Associations between **applicant gender (female vs. male)** or **career rank (student, resident, junior faculty, or senior faculty)** and each dependent variable were estimated using mixed multivariate models.

## Conclusions

These findings, while preliminary, suggest that traditional barriers related to perceived female researcher competence are not experienced as they interact with research administrators.

- ✓ Contrary to previous research examining faculty gender biases and stereotypes, our study showed that **applicants were rated similarly in researcher competence across both male and female applicants** by research administrators (Hypothesis 1).
- ✓ **Female candidates were generally seen as more likeable** (researcher collegiality) and **were rated higher for mentoring potential** than male candidates (Hypothesis 2).
- ✓ Furthermore, applicants in the **senior career rank were more highly rated for research competence and skill** (Hypothesis 3) and for biosketch design and comprehension.

**The main implication of this study is that research administrators do not appear to contribute to the previously reported discrimination and prejudice against the competence of female research faculty.**

## Selected References

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